Pregnancy & Breast-Feeding

If I become infected with WNV during pregnancy does it pose a health risk to my unborn child?

One case of transmission of West Nile virus from mother to fetus during pregnancy was reported in New York in 2002. The newborn presented severe medical problems at birth; however, it is unclear whether WNV infection caused these problems. The CDC is currently working to learn more about WNV in pregnancy.

I am pregnant, and I have been bitten by a mosquito. Should I be tested for West Nile virus?

Most mosquitoes are not infected with West Nile virus and illnesses related to mosquito bites are uncommon. However, pregnant women who become ill should see their health care provider. Those who have an illness consistent with acute WNV infection should undergo appropriate diagnostic testing.

Can West Nile virus be transmitted through breast milk?

There is one case where mother-to-child transmission through breast milk is believed to have occurred. An infant with minimal outdoor exposure tested positive for WNV. Laboratory analysis showed evidence of WNV in the mother's breast milk.

Should I continue breast-feeding if I am symptomatic or test positive for West Nile virus?

Because the health benefits of breast-feeding are well established, and the risk for West Nile virus transmission through breast-feeding is unknown, the CDC does not recommend a change in breast-feeding recommendations. The current American Academy of Pediatrics recommendations are that infants should be breast-fed exclusively for the first six months of life and continued for at least the first full year of life.

For more information on West Nile virus in pregnant and breast-feeding women visit our website at

http://www.badskeeter.org or call 1-877-WYO-BITE (1-877-996-2483)



West Nile Virus!

Information for Pregnant and Breast-Feeding Women

WYOMING DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

1-877-WYO-BITE WWW.BADSKEETER.ORG



What is Clest Pile Virus?

West Nile virus (WNV) is a potentially serious mosquito-borne disease that can lead to encephalitis or swelling of the brain. Mosquitoes spread this virus after they feed on infected birds and then bite people, other birds, or animals. Experts believe WNV is established as a seasonal epidemic in North America that flares up in the summer and continues into the fall.

Susceptibility

Who's at risk?

People who spend a lot of time outdoors are more likely to be bitten by an infected mosquito. Anyone from infants to the elderly can get WNV; however, people over 50 years of age have the highest risk of developing severe symptoms if they are infected. Pregnancy and nursing do not increase the risk of becoming infected with WNV.

How can I get West Nile virus?

The main route of human infection is through the bite of an infected mosquito. In a very small number of cases, WNV has also been spread through blood transfusions, organ transplants, breast-feeding, and even during pregnancy from mother to baby.

Protect Gourself

Because of ongoing concerns that mother-tochild transmission may occur with possible adverse health effects, pregnant women should take precautions to reduce their risk for WNV. You can do this by remembering the 5 D's of West Nile virus prevention:

Dawn and Dusk- When possible, avoid spending time outside at dawn and dusk. Dawn and dusk are times that mosquitoes are most active.

Dress- Wear shoes, socks, long pants, and a long-sleeved shirt when outdoors for long periods of time or when mosquitoes are most active (dawn and dusk). Clothing should be light colored and made of tightly woven materials to keep mosquitoes away from the skin.

DEET- Spray insect repellent containing DEET (N,N diethyl-m-toluamide) on exposed skin and clothing when you go outdoors. DEET is considered safe for pregnant women when used according to the directions on the product label. Although the most effective repellents contain DEET, there are other options such as a soybean oil based repellent that provide limited term protection. There are no reported adverse events following use of repellents containing DEET in pregnant or breast-feeding women.

Drain- At least once or twice a week, drain standing water and containers that collect water on or near your property. Mosquitoes may lay eggs in areas with standing water.

Symptoms

The majority of people infected with WNV do not become ill. People with mild infections may experience fever, headache, body aches, skin rash and swollen lymph glands. This is called West Nile fever.

People with more severe infections may experience high fever, headache, neck stiffness, stupor, disorientation, coma, tremors, convulsions, and paralysis. This is called West Nile encephalitis.

If you have any of these symptoms, contact your health care provider.

Birth Outcomes Registry

During 2003, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and state and local health departments formed a registry to follow birth outcomes among women with WNV illness in pregnancy. This will help scientists better understand the effect of WNV in pregnancy. As we continue to learn more, the best way to protect yourself and your child is to take precautions to avoid infection. If you have any questions or would like to learn more about WNV in pregnancy please contact the Wyoming Department of Health's West Nile virus hotline at 1-877-WYO-BITE.